

93-94 season Robert Aitken artistic director



new music concerts

A MESSAGE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Welcome to the 23rd season of New Music Concerts. It is astounding to think that we have been performing the latest works of musical creation over this long a time span. Even more astounding is the fact that for each and every concert we focus our total energy to perform every work to the very best of our ability, taking few short cuts and rehearsing all works to the maximum that time will allow. Often individual pieces receive over 40 hours of rehearsal with the very best musicians Canada can provide. To be fully secure with our interpretations (and to give extra credibility to our performances) the composers of the works are invited to help with the preparation, oversee the results and whenever suitable, conduct or perform their own music. Of course, this provides added satisfaction for the musicians themselves, because not only do they have the confidence that the approach to the performance is correct, but they come to know the personalities of the composers and gain a deeper understanding of their music. With this knowledge they are more confident about performing other works by the same composer.

We feel that this is one of the reasons Toronto has become such an exciting city for contemporary music. Few cities in the world can boast the number of contemporary music concerts we enjoy in Toronto or the wealth of performers. In recent years financial constrictions have forced most of us to reduce our seasons and consider carefully all that we are doing, but still it is one of the most active contemporary music centres in the world. I urge our audience and all concert goers to enjoy it, be proud of it, attend as many concerts as possible, help out financially when feasible, and encourage all your friends and visitors to the city to experience this special feature of musical life in Toronto. And don't forget, most of these works are only performed once. Unless they are broadcast by CBC's Two New Hours, it could be your only chance to hear them.

Robert Aitken, artistic director

Sunday, November 28, 1993

8:00 pm

duMaurier Theatre

east...west

BOB BECKER

Palta (1982) [dur. 12']

Sharda Sahai, tabla

Bob Becker, percussion

Bill Brennan, percussion

Mark Duggan, percussion

Russell Hartenberger, percussion

Trevor Tureski, percussion

Henry Kucharzyk, piano

NARESH SOHAL

Hexad (1971) [dur. 17']

1. *Adagio* 2. *Allegro* 3. *Allegro*

4. *Moderato* 5. *Adagio* 6. (*ad libitum*)

Douglas Stewart, flute

Neil Spaulding, horn

Fujiko Imajishi, violin

David Hetherington, cello

Roberto Occhipinti, double bass

Trevor Tureski, percussion

Robert Aitken, conductor

TRICHY SANKARAN

Catch 21 (1993) [dur. 8'] **

Trichy Sankaran, mrdangam

Bill Brennan, percussion

Mark Duggan, percussion

Russel Hartenberger, percussion

Trevor Tureski, percussion

Program

NARESH SOHAL

The Unsung Song (1993) [dur.15'] **

Elizabeth Turnbull, mezzo soprano

Douglas Stewart, flute

Michelle Verheul, clarinet

Neil Spaulding, horn

Fujiko Imajishi, violin

David Hetherington, cello

Roberto Occhipinti, double bass

Trevor Tureski, percussion

Janice Lindscoog, harp

Henry Kucharzyk, piano

Robert Aitken, conductor

INTERMISSION

TRICHY SANKARAN

Misra Mela (1993) [dur.15'] **

Trichy Sankaran, mrdangam

Andrew Timar, suling

BOB BECKER

Noodrem (1992) [dur.7'] *

Henry Kucharzyk, piano

Bob Becker, percussion

Russel Hartenberger, percussion

Trevor Tureski, percussion

Mark Duggan, percussion

SHARDA SAHAI AND TRICHY SANKARAN

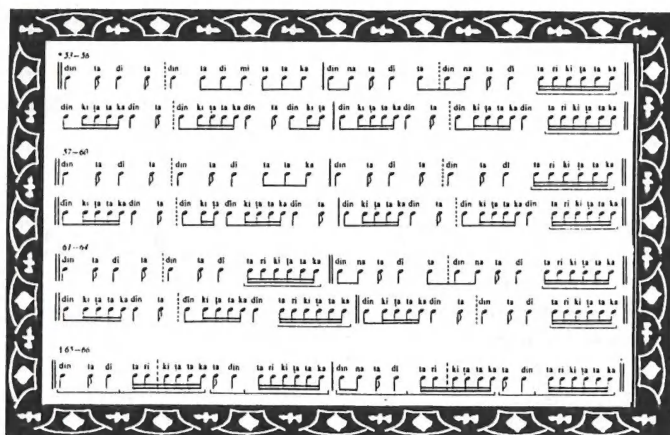
Jugal-Bundi (improvisations in a
sixteen- beat rhythmic cycle)

Pandit Sharda Sahai, tabla

Trichy Sankaran, mrdangam

** World Premiere

* Canadian Premiere

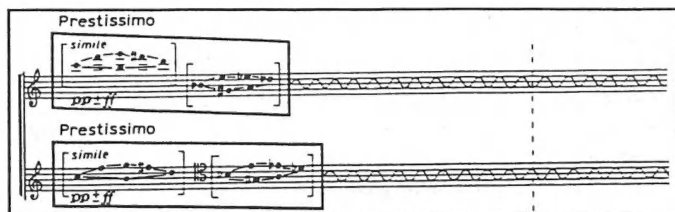


Born in India in 1939, **Naresh Sohal** studied science and mathematics at Punjab University before emigrating to England in 1962. He studied harmony and counterpoint at the London College of Music in 1965 and took private composition lessons with Dale Roberts (1965-66). In 1972-74 a British Arts Council bursary enabled him to research the compositional aspects of micro-intervals under the supervision of Alexander Goehr at Leeds University.

His early work, **Hexad** (1971), manifests its title in both form and instrumentation and demonstrates his interest in micro-tonal music. A sextet in six movements, it was written for Elgar Howarth and the London Contemporary Players and first performed by them on 13 July 1971 at Goldsmiths' College, London. It was subsequently included in a major international tour by the Norddeutscher Rundfunk Ensemble, receiving eighteen performances in eleven countries.

Hexad has at times an emphasis on the manipulation of small melodic cells that recalls the music of Webern, but despite the numerous canonic passages contained in its inner movements, it is not a completely serial work. Equal in importance to its intervallic symmetries is the exploration of quarter-tones in both harmonic and contrapuntal contexts and the utilization of rhythmic and formal structures based on accelerating and decelerating pulsations.

The allusions to the number 'six' take a visual form in the finale of the work, in which each player improvises from a number of hexachords notated in such a way as to suggest models of crystalline structures or constellations:



Unlike **Hexad**, Sohal's **The Unsung Song**, for contralto and chamber ensemble, is noticeably more 'Indian' in both its sound and structure. An emphasis on principles of repetition and recurrence link this work with the ancient traditions of his homeland. The *ostinato* harp and piano at the beginning of the work, for example, fulfill the role of the *tambura* in the Carnatic ensemble by providing a drone of perfect fifths and fourths which traditionally establish the tonic and dominant of a given *raga*. Typically however the composer extends the basic classical techniques, in this case enriching the harmonic implications of this drone by super-imposing additional pairs of fifths at the interval of a tritone. A similar expansion of tradition is the manner in which the characteristic melody first heard in the flute is developed with Western canonic procedures yet always returns to the Eastern concept of recurring thematic cycles.

The Unsung Song was commissioned by New Music Concerts especially for this concert. It is one of many settings by Sohal of texts by the legendary Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). Recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, Tagore was himself the prolific composer of more than 2500 songs.

Mezzo soprano **Elizabeth Turnbull** has been heard on the concert and operatic stages of Germany, the United States and Canada. Most recently she appeared as Carmen in both the Banff Festival's production (*La Tragedie de Carmen*) and the Mississauga City Centre Opera presentation of Bizet's *Carmen*. Other operatic roles have included

Dorabella; Cherubino; the Mother in Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*; and Augusta in Douglas Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe*. Recent concerts have included appearances with the Aldeburgh Connection, the Bach Consort, New Music Concerts and the Edmonton Symphony.

Text

*The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day.
I have spent my days in stringing and in unstringing my
instrument.*

*The time has not come true, the words have not been
rightly set;*

only there is the agony of wishing in my heart.

The blossom has not opened; only the wind is sighing by.

I have not seen his face, nor have I listened to his voice;

*only I have heard his gentle footsteps from the road
before my house.*

*The livelong day has passed in spreading his seat on the
floor;*

*but the lamp has not been lit and I cannot ask him into
my house.*

*I live in the hope of meeting with him; but this meeting
is not yet.*

Bob Becker holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the Eastman School of Music where he studied percussion with William Street and John Beck, and composition with Warren Benson. He also spent four years doing post-graduate study in the World Music program at Wesleyan University where he became intensely involved with the music cultures of North and South India, Africa and Indonesia. He has appeared as *tabla* soloist in India and has accompanied many of the major artists of Hindustani music. He is also a founding member of the Flaming Dono West African Dance and Drum Ensemble in Toronto.

As a founding member of the percussion ensemble Nexus he has appeared as soloist with the New York Philharmonic, the Boston Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra and the Detroit Symphony among many others.

As a regular member of the ensemble "Steve Reich and Musicians", he has toured world-wide and appeared as soloist with the Israel Philharmonic, the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic and the London Symphony.

Generally considered to be one of the world's foremost virtuoso performers on the xylophone and marimba, he appears regularly as an independent soloist and clinician and has been involved with the collection and construction of a unique multi-cultural body of instruments reflecting his wide background of training and experience.

Becker's two works for percussion ensemble incorporate a number of tuned melodic percussion instruments. Melody in Indian classical music is based on the concept of the *raga* ("that which colours the mind"), melodic constructs which are classified in a number of ways: through the number of notes in their scale, the pitches used, the manner in which these scales ascend or descend, and the presence or absence of decorative microtonal notes and special melodic ornaments. Two *ragas* may have the same scale but different predominant notes or characteristic motifs. The hundreds of possible *ragas* are also associated with certain colours, seasons, times of day and moods.

Becker has observed that he favours *ragas* containing relatively few tones, in particular pentatonic modes containing no fifth scale degree: "*Rag Chandrakauns, traditionally linked to the full moon and late-night hours and with the scale degrees tonic, minor third, fourth, minor sixth, major seventh, has always attracted me. I have used these intervallic relationships to determine both the melodic and harmonic content of nearly all of my music for the past six years.*"

The composer has supplied the following notes for the works we will hear this evening:

Noodrem was, for no particular reason, the first word that I learned in the Dutch language. I enjoyed the sound of the word both in its correct Dutch pronunciation (noat' rem) and its usual, at least by me, American mispronuncia-

tion (new' drum). Although I selected this word as a title after the piece was finished, its basic definition- "emergency brake", as well as several interesting English anagrams, did seem to bear some relationship to the music.

Noodrem was commissioned through the Canada Council by the Dutch ensemble *Slagwerkgroep den Haag*, and was completed in December, 1992. It is dedicated to all the members of this ensemble, past and present, with respect and affection.

Palta was composed in 1981 as a kind of concerto for the North Indian drums known as 'tabla'. The Hindi word 'palta' refers to variations made on a theme. In this piece the drums play, in addition to composed passages, improvised variations on four different rhythmic themes. The accompanying instruments, which include *almglocken*, *crotales*, *glockenspiel*, *marimba*, *vibraphone*, *songbells* and *tuned gongs* (or *electric keyboard*), play *harmonized variations on a cyclic pentatonic melody*.

Trichy Sankaran is internationally renowned for his mastery of the South Indian percussion, specifically the *mrdangam* and the *kanjira* (tambourine). He began his musical training with his cousin Sri P.A. Venkataraman, and later became a disciple of the great drummer, the late Sri Palani Subramania Pillai. Since making his debut at the age of thirteen, he has performed with all the leading musicians of South India, concertized widely in India, Southeast Asia, Europe and North America, and made several recordings as a soloist and ensemble performer. In addition to his usual traditional settings, he has also performed with jazz, African, electronic, and other contemporary music ensembles.


Sankaran is the founder and Professor of Indian music studies at York University in Toronto, where he has been teaching since the early 1970's. His seminars on Indian music have been filmed by the CBC and his writings include a textbook on *mrdangam* performance and rhythmic theory.

Mrdangam, the principal percussion instrument of South India is a two-headed barrel shaped drum. It is used for accompanying classical music and dance besides solo performances. This highly evolved instrument is capable of a wide variety of sounds. The prominent head is tuned to the tonic, while the other provides a bass tone.

The *suling*, heard in the composition **Misra Mela** (1993), is a bamboo flute found in Sumatra, Java, Bali and elsewhere in Indonesia. This duet for *suling* and *mrdangam* is an arrangement of themes from Sankaran's contemporary *gamelan* compositions, **Lagu Misra** (1990) and **Mela Tembang** (1993). The work highlights melodic motives in rhythmic permutations of seven, and a variety of modes (some of them of Indonesian origin) and modulations against a continuous drone.

Classical music in India utilizes recurring cycles of beats called *tala*. Each *tala* has points of emphasis that divide it into sections, or *angas* (literally, "limbs") that often have an asymmetrical nature. Indian drumming patterns may also be spoken, through the use of *bols* (Carnatic *solkatu*) or vocal syllables, which duplicate the various sounds made on the drum.

Sankaran's **Catch 21** is based on an unusual *tala* of 21 beats, divided in the following manner:



Ta ToM Ta ToM Ta Ta ToM Ta Din Gi Na ToM

The syllables associated with this *tala*, and indeed the entire composition were inspired by the poetic rhythm of archaic Tamil prosody, and it is this connection that forms the basis for the conclusion of the work. The composition is scored for claves, congas, *kanjira*, marimbas and voice.

Improvisation for Mrdangam and Tabla

Though the Persian origins of the pair of North Indian hand drums, the *tabla baya*, remain virtually undocumented, their techniques bear some resemblance to those of the antecedant *mrdangam* from the South.

Distinctions between the classical styles of North and South India began to be defined in the 13th century. The Northern or *Hindustani* style is broadly perceived to afford greater scope for improvisation and virtuosity for its own sake, while the Southern or *Carnatic* style is characterized by its attention to pre-composed models and its more systematic approach to the musical process.

Although numerous asymmetrical *talas* (such as that of **Catch 21**) traditionally exist or have been invented as frameworks for improvisation, they still make up less than half of what is normally heard in a traditional performance. The quadratric 16-beat *tala* (Hindustani *tin-tal*, Carnatic *adi tala*) outweighs all the others combined. It is used in all tempos and in virtually every style.

Sharda Sahai has performed over one thousand concerts worldwide. In India he has appeared as both soloist and accompanist in all of the important music conferences. His solo performances have been broadcast on All India Radio's prestigious National Program. His accompaniment experience includes every major artist of North Indian classical music including sitarists Ravi Shankar, Vilayat Khan and Nikhil Banerjee as well as the sarodists Ali Akbar Khan and Amjad Ali Khan.

Since 1980 *Pandit* Sahai has been dividing his time between a busy professional schedule in India and concerts and teaching in England and Canada. He has been conducting an on-going summer programme in Toronto, where, besides teaching tabla students at beginning through advanced levels, he has presented workshops for the Royal Conservatory of Music and performed more than twenty full-length solo tabla concerts.

New Music Concerts

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TWO NEW HOURS

**WITH/AVEC
RICHARD PAUL**

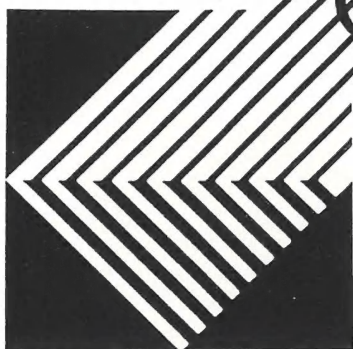


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